

Forest Service Resource Assistants Program Frequently Asked Questions

Who can be a resource assistant?

The Resource Assistants Program is authorized by [16 USC 1725](#) for individuals age 17 and up and U.S. citizens or permanent residents, and gives preference to students enrolled in or graduates of minority-serving institutions.

What do resource assistants do?

Resource assistants perform activities and functions in a variety of disciplines that contribute to accomplishing the Forest Service's mission and priorities; adhere to agency and office policies, procedures and rules; and, track their own professional development and goals.

What benefits do resource assistants receive?

In addition to learning about the work of the Forest Service and natural resources land management, access to practical on-the-job experience comparable to GS-04 or higher positions, and work-related training opportunities, and coaching and mentoring by Forest Service staff and networks, resource assistants receive:

- Minimum weekly stipend of \$500 (full time) or \$350 (part time)
- Training and travel, housing and commuting allowance
- Health care insurance
- Direct hire and noncompetitive hiring eligibilities upon successful program completion

How long is the Resource Assistants Program and is there a limit on how long one can be a resource assistant?

The minimum commitment is 960 hours for completion and cannot exceed more than 3,500 hours in a 2-year period.

What is the role of Resource Assistants Program partners?

The Forest Service is required by legislative authority ([16 USC 1725](#)) to work with partner organizations to implement the Resource Assistants Program. Partner organizations are responsible for the recruitment and screening of a diverse pool of applicants; provide ongoing program support to resource assistants such as paying their stipends, disbursing benefits and managing logistics for travel and training; and, tracking and reporting engagement and outcomes of resource assistants engaged.

Are resource assistants eligible for paid leave?

Yes, resource assistants are paid for all Federal Holidays and accrue 4 hours per pay period of paid leave.

Can resource assistants wear a Forest Service Uniform?

Resource assistants may wear uniforms if their position requires regular interaction with members of the public. FSH 6509.11k Chapter 40 provides guidance on how to determine if a non-employee requires a uniform. If a resource assistant requires a uniform, the Forest Service hosting unit is responsible for facilitating the purchase and request.



What is the Direct Hire Authority (DHA) and how does it work?

[16 USC 1725b](#) grants individuals who have successfully completed the requirements of Forest Service Resource Assistants Program (RAP) direct hire authority eligibility. This authority allows resource assistants to be considered for Forest Service jobs without competition if they meet the qualifications and other eligibility requirements for the position. Individuals hired using this authority must be U.S. citizens and may be appointed to General Schedule positions on a permanent, term or temporary basis in the competitive service. The DHA is different from the Resource Assistants Noncompetitive Hiring Authority. Resource assistants may become eligible for both hiring authorities upon successful completion of the program.

What are the requirements for a resource assistant to be eligible for the DHA?

The resource assistant must successfully complete a minimum of 960 hours and earned an associate or higher degree from an accredited institution of higher education.

What is the period of DHA eligibility after completion of the RAP?

Eligibility is for 2 years after successful completion of the Resource Assistants Program requirements. The 2-year timeframe cannot be paused, extended, or deferred for any reason. The individual must be on board (start the job) before two years from the date of their signed DHA eligibility certificate.

Can non U.S. citizens with the RAP DHA be appointed to federal jobs using this authority?

No, an individual appointed under the DHA and noncompetitive hiring authority must be a U.S. citizen.

Are there restrictions on the type of positions (occupational series and grade) that may be filled using the DHA for former resource assistants?

No, individuals may be appointed to any General Schedule position if they meet the qualifications.

How does the DHA differ from the Resource Assistants Noncompetitive Hiring Eligibility authority?

The DHA does not require a former resource assistant to respond to a vacancy announcement on USAJOBS to be hired and can be used to fill permanent, term, or temporary General Schedule positions. To utilize the noncompetitive hiring authority, a former resource assistant must apply to a vacancy announcement on USAJobs and this authority can only be used to fill permanent General Schedule positions.